United Nations A/53/PV.81

General Assembly
Fifty-third Session

Official Records

81st plenary meeting
Monday, 7 December 1998 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 160

Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/574 and Corr.1)

Draft resolution (A/53/L.43/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Pakistan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. Kamal (Pakistan): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution on the global implications of the year 2000 (Y2K) date conversion of computers, contained in document A/53/L.43/Rev.1

The recent revolution in the field of information technology has not only altered all the areas of human activity but has also greatly contributed to global prosperity. Current trends clearly indicate that information technology will play a pivotal role in the economic growth and sustainable development of nations in the next millennium.

The interests of all nations and organizations require that communication and computer functions continue unhindered in the next century. Any disruption in these information systems could seriously impair global economic activities and push the global economy further towards crisis and depression.

Every minute that is ticking by is bringing us closer to the threat of the Y2K or millennium bug, which could plague our computer systems at the dawn of the new millennium. It was believed initially that the Y2K problem was confined to computer software alone. However, time has just brushed aside that notion. The parameters of Y2K are in a state of constant flux. With every passing day, a new area that may possibly be affected is being added to the list. The possible crash of embedded microchips used in various appliances and equipment and the interlinkages between computer systems have made the problem all the more complex and serious. This complexity has made it almost impossible to correctly gauge the havoc that the millennium bug could play in our lives.

Estimates about the possible fallout of the Y2K problem range from the conservative to the astronomical. Some predict total chaos and anarchy at the turn of the next century; others simply trivialize it by calling it a non-event. The truth lies between the two extremes, but nobody knows exactly where. The fact is that the problem is staring us in the face, and it has to be dealt with in an effective manner.

98-86626 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The interlinkages of computer systems and the intertwined nature of the world economy necessitate a global response to this global threat. It would be wrong to presume that the developed nations, whose reliance on modern technology is heavy, will be the only victims of the millennium bug, as even those nations whose reliance on modern technology is minimal will be hurt by the fallout.

The global threat that the Y2K poses and the need for a global response bring into sharper focus the role of the United Nations and the international multilateral system. Efforts in the United Nations are two-pronged. The first relates to rectifying the computer systems within the United Nations system around the world. The progress on this front is heartening, as compliance is expected to be achieved within the rigid time-frame. Even so, no chances are being taken, and efforts are under way for subsequent crisis management.

The second relates to the situation in almost 200 Member and observer States of the United Nations, where the situation, regrettably, is not so heartening. On the one hand, developing countries took the problem rather too casually, labouring under the notion that they would somehow be insulated from the effects of this menace. On the other hand, some developed countries have been lax, and as a result several of them are now lagging behind. Both face the same challenge because of the deep interconnections in our global network of computer links.

Unfortunately, the awareness and action levels, particularly on issues like crisis management and contingency planning, have still not attained the required pace called for by the immutable deadline of 31 December 1999. There is a need to further highlight the Y2K problem in Member States and to exchange views on the overall status of remedial responses in each of them. To realize this primary objective, the Working Group on Informatics has organized a Y2K national coordinators' meeting to take place here at the United Nations on 11 December 1998. In addition to the national Y2K coordinators, members of the Permanent Missions and representatives of regional groupings have also been invited. This meeting will not only further international cooperation on Y2K and bring the national coordinators onto the same wavelength, but will also focus on pivotal issues like crisis management and contingency planning.

In order to focus proper attention on this problem and to highlight the need for concrete action, this matter is again being brought before the General Assembly. Accordingly, Pakistan has the honour to present draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, which has been prepared as a result of wide consultations. The draft resolution welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. It requests the Member States to urgently increase their efforts to solve the Y2K problem and to appoint their respective national coordinators for this purpose. It calls on all Member States to work together to address the threats that the Y2K problem poses globally. It urges them to emphasize the importance of contingency planning and to develop plans to address possible large-scale failures in the public and private sectors. It expresses appreciation for the guidelines prepared by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1998 and urges Member States to draw upon them.

The draft resolution further calls on the Secretary-General to ensure compliance within all parts of the United Nations system and calls for a monitoring and reporting system within the United Nations so that action can be completed well before the deadline. The draft resolution also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address the year 2000 problem. It expresses appreciation for the establishment of the trust fund by the World Bank to assist in the efforts to resolve the Y2K problem and for the substantial voluntary contributions made to it by the member States.

We hope that the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the outset, the Group wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. It also wishes to express its gratitude to the Ad Hoc Working Group on Informatics for its valuable contributions to the work of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the Y2K issue. We are particularly grateful to the Chairman of the Working Group, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal, for the dynamic stewardship that he brings to the deliberations of the Working Group.

The nature of the Y2K problem and its implications for all countries makes it imperative to promote a degree

of awareness among Member States. Given the indisputable fact that the Y2K problem is a global one having profound consequences for the entire global community, it requires concerted and intensified global efforts to rectify it within the immoveable time-frame.

In this regard, the Group notes with appreciation the efforts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, including, in particular, its plan to hold the Y2K national coordinators meeting on 11 December 1998. The Group has also noted other achievements of the Working Group with regard to Y2K, such as the informatics symposiums, the suggested guidelines for addressing the Y2K problem adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 1998 substantive session and its frequent newsletters and circulars which keep Member States abreast of the latest activities and useful information about the Working Group. Such initiatives will not only create a level of awareness of the problem but will also help in dealing with it in an effective manner. In this regard, it cannot be denied that even greater efforts need to be exerted, including regional workshops on Y2K and related issues such as contingency planning and crisis management, thereby assisting the developing States to confront this issue effectively.

Developing States, unfortunately, lack adequate resources to deal with a problem of such magnitude. Furthermore, since developing countries will be the most negatively impacted due to their vulnerable position, they will need assistance both in the form of technical know-how and financial resources in order to effectively tackle those effects. In the increasing globalized world of contemporary times, the failures of the developing world to address the problem effectively would be bound to have contagious consequences for the rest of the world.

It was therefore most appropriate and relevant that the General Assembly adopted resolution 52/233, and the draft resolution before us today also requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries to address the year 2000 problem and to facilitate the dissemination of relevant information on those funding possibilities to the Member States.

The Group has noted that at last year's session the resolution on this item was adopted by consensus. The resolution of the Economic and Social Council on "Suggested guidelines for addressing the year 2000 problem of computers" was also adopted by consensus. We are pleased to lend our support to the draft resolution before us.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country, Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Liechtenstein and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union believes that there are two main aspects to the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers that merit the full attention of the General Assembly. First, we have to make certain that the United Nations will be Y2K compliant in time. Secondly, we have to draw the attention of all Member States and, in particular, of developing countries, to the importance and potential negative impact of the millennium bug.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report A/53/574 and its clear and concise presentation both of the problem itself and of the remedial steps taken by the Secretariat so far. We are satisfied that the Secretariat is addressing the issue properly, and we would hope that the existing momentum will be maintained to ensure that all potentially affected systems throughout the United Nations will continue to work as they should on 1 January 2000. We are particularly happy to note that the importance of the domino effect is being duly recognized: it will indeed be essential to identify to what extent the United Nations will be affected by non-Y2K-compliant external partners.

In contrast to the situation in the Secretariat, awareness of the seriousness of the problem seems to differ appreciably among Member States. This is where the European Union sees the real importance of today's debate. We would hope that delegations report extensively to their capitals and try to get the message across to the competent authorities that the millennium bug has to be addressed urgently and in a coordinated fashion.

On Friday the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics will gather national coordinators on the

Y2K problem. The European Union appreciates the remarkable efforts of the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, in his capacity as Chairman of the Working Group, in organizing this upcoming meeting and acknowledges the substantial support offered by the host country. We look forward to this meeting, which should allow a valuable exchange of information between national coordinators. In our view, this sort of networking is indispensable if we are to minimize the impact of the millennium bug.

Nobody, even if they are absolutely certain of the Y2K compatibility of their own systems, can afford to be complacent. We should like to underline the importance of giving priority to mission-critical systems, and, given the growing realization that we will not be able to eradicate the millennium bug before the end of next year, we must stress that contingency planning will be crucial for quickly overcoming the inevitable problems. As part of this, it is important to consider the implications for national infrastructures of possible cross-border supply-chain failures. While the Y2K problem may appear to be overstated for various reasons by people with vested interests, it would be a terrible mistake to underestimate it.

Before concluding, I should like to thank Ambassador Kamal for presenting the draft resolution before us, which reflects the constructive spirit prevailing in the Working Group and its technical sub-group and which the European Union therefore fully supports.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): The key question on our minds today is a simple one: is the Y2K problem a serious one or is it not? What I hope to demonstrate in my remarks today is that this is a serious but not necessarily apocalyptic problem, unless we choose to ignore it.

By now the origins of the Y2K problem are well known. It began as a small, technical oversight in the 1960s, when computer programmers, in an effort to save computer memory, designed systems which recorded only the last two digits of the year. For example, 1970 was recorded as "70". This will create problems as we approach the year 2000, as the computers will not be able to distinguish between the years 1900 and 2000.

Peter de Jaeger, who has studied the Y2K problem since 1991, illustrated the problem with a simple, vivid example:

> "I was born in 1955. If I ask the computer to calculate how old I am today, it subtracts 55 from 98 and announces that I'm 43 ... But what happens in the year 2000? The computer will subtract 55 from 00 and will state that I am minus 55 years old. This error will affect any calculation that produces or uses time spans ... If you want to sort by date (e.g. 1965, 1905, 1966), the resulting sequence would be 1905, 1965, 1966. However, if you add in a date record such as 2015, the computer, which reads only the last two digits of the date, sees 05, 15, 65, 66 and therefore sorts them incorrectly."

In some cases, the problem may result in nothing more than ridiculous but inconsequential miscalculations. Perhaps we will be overcharged on our credit card bills, or perhaps our ages will be wrongly reflected in hospital records. These are inconvenient but not necessarily life-threatening problems. However, in other cases, Y2K could have serious economic or even fatal results.

We do not as yet completely understand the full implications of the Y2K problem. However, the first symptoms have already shown themselves. At the British department store Marks and Spencer in London, a computer destroyed tons of food when it misread the expiry date of 2002 as the year 1902 and thought that the food had expired 96 years earlier. Similar problems have occurred at other warehouses with similar computers. Cash registers are also known to have crashed because they were unable to handle credit cards with expiry dates in the year "00", that is the year 2000.

There is a dangerous myth that the Y2K problem is faced mainly by developed countries and that developing countries, with their lower use of technology, will not be seriously affected. This myth is sustained by writings that depict Y2K as a problem that affects only the most technologically advanced countries. For instance, the *New York Times* best-seller *Time Bomb 2000: What the Year 2000 Computer Crisis Means to You!* said that "approximately 50 per cent of the human race, particularly in large sections of China and Africa, has never made a phone call, so not everyone would be affected" by the Y2K problem. This myth is dangerous because it can lull developing countries into a false sense of security.

Paradoxically, it is the most technologically advanced countries with the greatest number of computers that are likely to be the least affected by the Y2K problem. Most developed countries are already well on their way in preparing themselves for Y2K. The *Financial Times* reported last week that the United States

had made 61 per cent progress towards addressing the Y2K problem in the financial sector, while Germany, France and the United Kingdom had made 54 per cent, 49 per cent and 47 per cent progress respectively. Of the organizations in the United States that were surveyed, only 1 per cent would not be able to complete their preparations by 1 January 2000.

In contrast, many developing countries are only just realizing the potential problems of Y2K. Ms. Joyce Amenta, former Director of the United Nations Information Technology Services Division, has said that developing countries have "insufficient resources to ... fix the Year 2000 problem". Ms. Amenta predicted that in developing countries, "fear will start to hit next year. People will start to take their money out of the bank". This would lead to "further and further paralysis as we get closer to the date".

Developing countries are thus not immune from the Y2K problem. The problem can affect any equipment that involves date calculations, including computer systems that deal with payrolls, telecommunications, aviation, sewage, interest rates and banking systems, just to name a few examples. For example, a sewage system that releases waste into the sea at different times every day depending on tidal flows might stop working if its computer calendar cannot recognize the year 00. Any country which uses electricity or has a bank, an airline or a telephone network will have to check to see if its systems are Y2K-compliant. Otherwise, on 1 January 2000, those services might cease to operate.

The key problem here is that there is no instant, miracle cure for the Y2K problem. The *Financial Times* reported last week that the Intel Corporation, the world's largest manufacturer of computer processors, has discovered that there are no magic fixes to the Y2K problems. According to Mr. Louis Burns, Intel's chief information officer, the problem can only be solved by good, hard, rigorous work and by paying attention to detail. Adding two digits to the date field in a computer program is not technically difficult. The difficulty comes in trying to identify all the points in the computer program where dates are critical and have to be changed, and how the different programs relate to one another. This is a highly time-consuming process, and time is running out.

At the United Nations, it is not uncommon for us to defer an agenda item when no simple solution exists. Unfortunately, Y2K is a deadline we cannot postpone. We cannot bury our heads and wish it away. Like a meteorite hurtling towards us, Y2K will strike in exactly 389 days' time. We cannot avoid it, and it is by now too late to try to reprogram every piece of computer equipment. Capers Jones, head of Software Productivity Research, Inc., has estimated that finding, fixing and testing all Y2K-affected software would require over 700,000 person-years. There are just not enough qualified people or hours to completely eradicate the problem. However, we can work together to minimize the damage.

My delegation is therefore pleased that the United Nations has decided to discuss the global implications of the Y2K problem at this session of the General Assembly. We need to raise global awareness of the Y2K problem so that we can all be prepared for it when it strikes. We are also pleased that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council will be meeting on 11 December 1998 with national Y2K coordinators to discuss how to deal with the Y2K problem. Singapore will be sending its national coordinator to that meeting.

Allow me also briefly to share some of the steps that Singapore has taken to address the problem at the national level. In the public sector, all government agencies have been instructed to complete the conversion of affected systems by the end of this year, leaving the whole of 1999 for testing. In the private sector, we have provided grants to help small and medium-sized companies defray up to 70 per cent of their Y2K implementation consultancy costs. We have also established a Web site to provide more information to the public on the problems of Y2K.

Singapore also strongly supports international efforts to battle the Y2K problem. In March next year, the Association of Banks in Singapore will be hosting the Global 2000 meeting in Singapore. In South-East Asia, the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) is leading a Y2K task force of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to consider how the Y2K problem might affect air safety and air traffic control. Within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), the CAAS initiated a survey of actions taken by APEC countries to resolve the Y2K problem in air traffic control and airport systems. The CAAS also participated in the International Civil Aviation Organization Asia-Pacific Y2K task force. Singapore stands ready to share whatever information we have, so that we can work together to meet the challenges of Y2K.

Finally, to end on a positive note, while Y2K is a genuine problem, it has also resulted in some excessive

paranoia. Some groups, for example, have urged people to empty their bank accounts and stock up on food, water and weapons before the turn of the century. There is no reason for such hysteria, which would only add to the problem. Y2K is a technical glitch with potentially serious consequences, but it need not be apocalyptic. This is a problem that we should all prepare ourselves for and take in our stride. Y2K is the first challenge that the United Nations will have to face on the first day of the new millennium. If we work together, we can ensure that the new millennium takes off on a positive note.

My delegation supports the draft resolution just introduced by my good friend Ambassador Kamal.

Mr. Khare (India): We would like at the outset fully to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We thank the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive report, document A/53/574, on steps taken within the United Nations to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We would also like to thank the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council for its work.

We have carefully studied the report of the Secretary-General and greatly appreciate his indication that the year 2000 problem is not limited to computer systems. In fact, it will affect a large number of electronic systems that involve microprocessors based on dates. Furthermore, the possibility of a cascading or domino effect could result in significant disruptions in the economy and in the structures of governance. Increased interdependence and globalization ensure that none of us will be immune from this danger, unless all of us are year 2000-compliant, at least in systems deemed to be mission-critical. Of course, what is not mission-critical in one system could easily prove to be mission-critical in another which is only peripherally linked to it.

In our view, in order to provide sufficient time for testing solutions that may have been applied, the target date for year 2000 compliance cannot be 1 January 2000, but some time in the middle of next year. We have therefore noted with appreciation that at United Nations Headquarters the personal computers, the operating system and commercial software in the mainframe systems managed by the International Computing Centre in Geneva and the integrated management information system (IMIS) application are already fully year-2000-compliant. We have also noted the steps being taken by United Nations offices away from Headquarters.

We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts towards contingency planning based on the recognition outlined in paragraph 29 of his report that,

> "Even if the power supply and telecommunications infrastructure operated by the United Nations are fully compliant, links to external systems make them vulnerable."

We agree with the Secretary-General that the basic paradigm of contingency planning through resort to external resources does not apply in this case, since the problem is truly global.

India has made major strides in the introduction of information technology in the last decade. The Government has been a leading player in the use of this technology to improve the quality and speed of decision-making and services. Computerization has also been extensive in such key sectors of the economy as banks, stock exchanges, trade and industry. With such an extensive application of information technology in various sectors in the country, India has been at the forefront of developing cost-effective solutions to the problem. At the same time, we have also taken several steps to address the problem adequately within India. It has been variously estimated that the extent of the problem within India is roughly 0.33 per cent of the global problem and would require around $2 billion to redress. Allow me to briefly highlight some of the actions taken by us in this direction.

The Government has established a high-level task force to manage the impact of the year 2000 problem in the country. It will be chaired by Mr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, member of the Planning Commission, and includes members of both the Government and the public and private sectors, in order to act as a central nodal coordination agency. It will also manage a Rs 7 billion corpus fund to address the problem in the government sector.

The National Informatics Centre, the premier organization in the country in the Government sector serving the information technology needs of the central Government, state governments, as well as district-level administration, in early 1997 started the exercise of assessing the impact of the year 2000 problem on its

products and services. Most of its services are already Y2K-compliant and those which are not will be made so by the end of this year.

Recognizing the cascading impact on the economy of Y2K failures in the banking sector, the Reserve Bank of India — the country's central bank — has established a working group chaired by its Deputy Governor to monitor compliance through regular fortnightly reviews. The objective is to ensure that all such systems are fully compliant by the end of this year at the latest. Two essential criteria that would need to be fulfilled for a bank to be fully compliant are that its system should behave rationally when given dates after 31 December 1999 under real-time conditions and that it must be capable of tackling the leap-year factor of 2000.

The central bank indicated on 10 November 1998 that it will take penal measures against errant banks if need be and will carry out on-site supervisory examinations for verification. Banks will also have to furnish their contingency plans and provide compliance reports on their web sites for public information. Banks have also been advised to continuously validate their renovated systems, commencing 1 October this year, through testing with reference to critical dates. About 44 of the 104 commercial Indian banks and 12 of the 41 non-banking financial institutions were already Y2K-compliant by 30 September 1998. It is our expectation that 90 Indian banks will be fully compliant by 31 December 1998 and that all banks as well as financial institutions will be compliant soon thereafter.

Many airlines are not very clear as to whether or not they will fly on 1 January 2000. Air India, our national carrier, initiated action to ensure 100 per cent Y2K compliance well in advance. All its personal computers, aircraft, accounting packages and airport software were made fully compliant by April this year. Although Air India is Y2K-compliant internally, external linkages have to be borne in mind. It has therefore written to airports around the world where it operates to inquire about their status.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has initiated a Y2K-preparedness project, which is a time-bound schedule for a comprehensive plan to combat the problem. Exchanges will have to submit monthly reports on measures initiated by them and to become fully compliant by June 1999. The National Stock Exchange, which has 1,700 trading terminals in over 200 cities, is not only updating all its internal systems and software supplied to members but is also insisting that the members' back-office systems that interface with the national stock exchange system must also be Y2K-compliant.

In India we strongly believe that the problem should not be perceived simply as one related to the date of 1 January 2000. It would also be important for the solutions to recognize that the year 2000 is a leap year, as opposed to the year 1900, which was not. We are also concerned about other dangerous dates such as 9 September 1999, which is recognized by a non-compliant 6-digit date system as 990909. In fact, the General Insurance Company of India has indicated to all through widespread advertisements that claims arising out of Y2K or other dangerous dates such as that of 9 September 1999 would not be admissible. This has led to renewed vigour in public- and private-sector companies to effectively tackle the problem and reduce their liabilities. Several private-sector companies have already become Y2K- compliant. The Confederation of Indian Industry has set up a task force on the issue. It is also providing links on its web page for Y2K solutions. The National Association of Software and Services Companies is also taking a leading role in disseminating information, both in India and abroad, about Y2K-solution providers.

India is committed to effectively tackling the problem within its boundaries and to be of assistance, through its software companies and professionals, to other countries. In the same spirit, allow me to join others in commending Ambassador Ahmad Kamal for his work and in supporting the draft resolution before us.

Ms. Figuera (Venezuela) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

My delegation would first of all like to express its thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, A/53/574. We would also like to underscore the important work accomplished by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and especially to congratulate its Chairman, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan, whose dedication and commitment to the work entrusted to him has generated a productive dynamism in the Working Group. In terms of concrete results, that Working Group has been one of the most successful groups created by the Organization in recent years.

The advent of the new millennium has given rise to great expectations in all areas of human development, from the most specialized to the most mundane. Nevertheless, despite our growing dependence on information technology we have not paused to give serious thought to the grave effects of the year 2000 computer problem. Little over a year from the new millennium, little is known about the problem and even less about what has been done to resolve it in time.

In spite of the efforts deployed within the Organization, which have been reflected in various documents of the Economic and Social Council and in the adoption of resolution 52/233, we are still largely in the dark as to the potential repercussions of this problem on day-to-day productive activities and its effect on our basic industries, air traffic control radar and air traffic, customs and ports, health-care systems, and hospitals and intensive-care wards, among others.

Although applying timely corrective measures is up to Governments, the United Nations has a fundamental role to play in helping to disseminate information on the problem. Equally urgent is the devising of national contingency plans such as technical and financial assistance and support by multilateral agencies for developing countries. One important step in this direction is the meeting of national coordinators for the year 2000 computer problem, which will be held on 11 December here at the United Nations. We are pleased to see that the Organization is playing an active role in this respect by bringing together national experts to exchange ideas and mutually benefit from the progress already achieved by the members of the international community.

In the case of my country, Venezuela, I should like to note the establishment of a national governmental computer network known as the platinum network, through which one can obtain from reliable sources extensive documentation on the year 2000 date conversion problem. In addition, a survey has been prepared on the Internet whose objective is to gauge how much the people know about the problem, so that governmental campaigns can be properly focused to provide information on the effects of the year 2000 problem on the most critical areas.

The technological gap between developing and developed countries has always existed. That is beyond our immediate control. Unfortunately, in an increasingly globalized and techno-dependent world, that gap could have negative consequences. The international community has a deadline for solving the year 2000 problem — 31 December 1999 — and the draft resolution before us today represents an important step towards publicizing this fact. My delegation fully supports the draft, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): All of humankind agrees that the achievements realized in the field of informatics over the past few years at times surpass what had been imagined by scientists or by science-fiction writers.

The achievements registered in this field have opened the way to further progress by humankind. New conditions have been created that, if wisely used, will alleviate human suffering and contribute to promoting the realization of development and to reinforcing international cooperation based on the Charter of the United Nations, international legitimacy and a just peace.

The delegation of Syria supports the statement made by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would like in particular to express our appreciation for the efforts made by Ambassador Ahmad Kamal and for the dynamism with which he conducted the work of the Economic and Social Council's Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics. Those efforts are aimed at raising the awareness of the international community concerning the year 2000 date conversion problem and the measures to be taken. We welcome the Secretary-General's report submitted under agenda item 160 on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We welcome also the steps taken within the United Nations system to address this problem in a timely manner.

In recent months, we have learned more about the year 2000 problem. All opinions in this field indicate that the problem is of a dual nature. On the one hand, it is a technical problem whose timely solution will require creative efforts; on the other, it is a huge financial problem. We have learned that resolving it will cost tens of billions of dollars.

While we call for cooperation among specialists from different parts of the world, who should work jointly to address this problem in a timely manner, and while we believe that a solution has become available to some computer systems in certain countries, we call also for finding ways to enable the developing countries to resolve this problem without adding to their budgets financial burdens they cannot bear. We believe that industrial companies and international financial

organizations could bear the costs of solving this problem in the developing countries.

The delegation of Syria hopes that the United Nations regional, economic and social commissions will give top priority to the resolution of this problem, following the example of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its fifty-fourth session.

We believe that the meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, to be held on 11 December, will make a constructive contribution in this field. In this respect, we look forward to reinforcing this kind of cooperation in the financial and technical fields.

The Syrian Arab Republic attaches great importance to the question of the year 2000 compliance of electronic and computer systems. The Syrian Government, at its meeting held on 30 March 1998, discussed this question and adopted decisions and measures requesting all parties to work together to find a solution to this problem. It decided also to ask the ministers to form committees under their leadership to follow up the question of year 2000 compliance. Those committees could resort to the help of experts and consultants in carrying out studies, holding training sessions and raising awareness of the problem. It also asked the administrations of various public sector institutions, companies and organizations to submit reports on the year 2000 compliance status of their electronic systems. If year 2000 compliance has not been achieved, committees will be established to assess the effect of non-compliance on those systems and possible solutions, and also to ensure that those solutions will enable the systems effectively to achieve year 2000 compliance.

The Syrian scientific committee on informatics plays an important role in our efforts to find a solution to this problem. Efforts are being made to increase awareness and disseminate information in order to make computers accessible to all citizens and establishments.

The delegation of Syria supports the draft resolution submitted under this item, and we believe that its adoption by the General Assembly will increase the momentum of international efforts to address the Y2K date conversion problem. We are going to participate in the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Informatics and wish that meeting all possible success.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): Resolution 52/233, on the "Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers", adopted during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, gave us a clear idea of all kinds of difficulties that States throughout the world might experience if practical steps are not taken to deal with this problem.

In view of the measures and initiatives taken both within the United Nations and by Member States, it would be reasonable to be optimistic regarding this phenomenon which could affect all aspects of our lives.

Senegal would like to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on this item and the various steps taken by the United Nations system that seek to ensure the proper functioning of the essential systems of the Organization and, at the same time, to promote effective international cooperation in this area.

This is also the moment to commend the outstanding work done by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council, under the dynamic chairmanship of Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan. The recommendations submitted by that group have enabled Member States both to evaluate more clearly the computer problem as we approach the next millennium and also to try to guard against the disturbing consequences it might have on most activities.

Aware of the importance of computers as an indispensable tool for development, Senegal very early on, in 1990, established a ministry for State modernization, with an information-technology branch. This body, supported by international cooperation — in particular, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization — already has a national programme coordinator for the transition to the year 2000.

A regulating body called the pilot committee has also been set up to elaborate a national strategy for transition to the year 2000. This body supervises technical committees charged with follow-up and with managing problems in various sectors such as energy, water, administration, small and medium-sized businesses, banks, and so forth. A centre for resources and a forum have also been created to allow the fruitful and effective exchange of information at the national level.

Thus Senegal is preparing to face the difficulties involved in computer conversion to the year 2000, and its national coordinator will take part in the meeting of the Working Group on Informatics planned for 11 December

1998. That meeting, one year before the transition to the year 2000, will take a look at all the various steps taken or planned and will also provide further evidence, in this time of globalization, that our world is a global village and that cooperation — in all fields, and the computer field in particular — has become an inescapable necessity.

The interest shown by our Organization in this issue leads to a certain optimism regarding the capacity of our States to deal successfully with this challenge arising at the threshold of twenty-first century. Senegal, like the other African countries, considers this a real challenge. We Africans understand that the threat posed by the computer transition to the next millennium requires collective action on both the national and global levels and that the global dimension of this threat, with all its implications, requires that we take a joint approach in order to achieve an overall solution.

For all of these reasons, my delegation supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, which, in fact, is the result of broad consultations, and we hope that all Member States will support this important draft.

Mr. Mangoaela (Lesotho): Let me begin by acknowledging the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, with which I fully associate myself.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for the concise report on the subject of global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, contained in document A/53/574. The Secretary-General has admirably met the expectations of General Assembly resolution 52/233 adopted last year.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to the valiant work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council, under the able leadership of Ambassador Kamal, and of its technical sub-group. The technical sub-group, bringing together members of missions and Secretariat staff, has worked tirelessly to draw our attention to the critical nature of the action required to address the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, other equipment and systems based on embedded chips. As we all now know, the list of such systems is very long and covers a wide variety of activities vital to any country's economy.

The digitization of telecommunications and the convergence of telecommunications and computers in the past few years has been one of the truly watershed phenomena of the present century and has provided the main impetus for the process of globalization. On numerous occasions and in various forums, the impact of globalization on the world economy, in particular its consequences for the economies of developing countries, has been a frequent mantra. Globalization has spawned a new economy — a tele-economy driven by computers. The smooth running of computers is, therefore, critically important not only for national economies but for the networked global economy as well.

As developing countries struggle to grapple with the complex rules of the new global trading system under the World Trade Organization, they pay scant attention to such seemingly arcane phenomena as the Y2K, or the "millennium bug", as it is popularly known. Small wonder, then, that all surveys find that developing countries are lagging behind in their appreciation of, and strategies for dealing with, the date conversion problem of their computer systems. How could it be otherwise when even a large number of industrialized countries evince the same lethargy?

It is said that some European countries have not paid the necessary attention to the problem because of their preoccupation with a higher priority — namely, the launching of the euro in four weeks' time. But we all know that such an attitude is unfortunate, as the one year remaining can prove to be grossly inadequate for remedying the neglect.

As the representative of Indonesia said on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, developing countries have weak coping mechanisms and will need considerable assistance from their more developed partners in the form of financial, technological and technical assistance for formulating correct strategies, as well as for carrying them out.

My delegation, therefore, strongly supports draft resolution A/53/L.43, especially in its request to the Secretary-General to take steps:

> "to ensure that the United Nations system closely monitors actual and potential sources of funding to support the efforts of the developing countries and countries with economies in transition to address the year 2000 problem".

In this context, my delegation is deeply appreciative of the efforts being made by United Nations system bodies, such as the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), the regional commissions and the World Bank, to raise awareness of the magnitude of the problem among their client countries and to help them find solutions to it.

Lesotho and other member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have benefited from the initiatives of the World Bank in organizing awareness-raising seminars for the region and providing financing for strategic planning through its Information for Development Program (infoDev) project.

As is often the case when epidemics such as the "millennium bug" occur, there are sceptics who downplay its effects. In this case, it is certainly better to err on the side of caution, because the domino effect that the collapse or malfunction of computer systems in one part of the world can have in other remote parts to which they are connected through global networks could spell disaster of truly global proportions.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Japan welcomes the introduction of the draft resolution on the year 2000 date conversion problem. We also commend the contributions made by the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, under the able leadership of Ambassador Kamal. The Working Group has contributed to directing the urgent attention of the Organization to this problem of the year 2000 date conversion. It is a problem that should be addressed in a concerted manner by the United Nations system, Member States, the public and private sectors and civil society.

Computers affect our lives today in an infinite number of ways. Sometimes we are not even aware of the extent to which we depend upon them. The date conversion problem of computers has wide-ranging effects on economic and social infrastructures, such as power supply, telecommunications, transportation, the financial system, public health and so forth. Lacking a well-functioning infrastructure, no business or government agency can operate successfully. Unless every nation shares its experiences in dealing with the year 2000 problem and coordinates the effort, the result may be worldwide confusion.

Today, fewer than 400 days are left before the year 2000. The United Nations must send out a clear and strong message to the international community. Using both multilateral and bilateral forums, we must heighten public awareness of the importance and urgency of the Y2K problem and take all possible measures to deal with it.

At the G-8 Summit in Birmingham in May of this year, heads of Government agreed to coordinate their Y2K activities, which have as their primary objective further awareness-raising and encouraging Governments to take action.

In Japan, in September of this year, the Government adopted a national Y2K Action Plan and requested both the public and private sectors to cooperate in its implementation. Under this national Action Plan, ministries and agencies will take necessary measures in accordance with the conversion guidelines we established and will complete their simulation tests on systems with high priority that are directly related to the daily lives of people by the end of June 1999. The ministries and agencies will also set up contingency plans explicitly covering the shut-downs, malfunctions and other contingencies for all priority systems on 1 January 2000 and will encourage all corporations to conduct independent check-ups at their own initiative, in accordance with the Private Industry Y2K Check List.

No nation is free from the Y2K problem. It affects all nations and has an enormous potential cross-border impact. Global cooperation is therefore essential to deal with this potentially serious impact. The United Nations is expected to take the initiative in promoting this end and in ensuring that all the nations of the world are prepared to meet this challenge. It is often said that developing countries lag behind developed countries in taking preventive measures. There is a growing need, therefore, to have an overall picture of global preparedness. In this regard, we hope that the special meeting of the Working Group on Informatics on 11 December will provide an important opportunity to discuss measures for international cooperation on the Y2K problem.

For these reasons, Japan supports the draft resolution on the year 2000 date conversion problem that we have before us.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): I am speaking on behalf of Ambassador Betty King. The United States is pleased to support the draft resolution on the global implications of the year 2000 problem of computers. With only 389 days left until the new millennium is upon us, this is a topic that is of utmost concern to all of us.

Some people may still believe that the effects of the year 2000, or Y2K, problem will be confined within the computer industry. Others do not know the meaning of

Y2K. For those of us who are not familiar with the intricacies of computer technology, it is hard to understand how our lives, and the lives of individuals around the world, can be affected by a computer problem. The reality is that systems for telecommunications, water, manufacturing, air transport, shipping, power and almost every other area risk serious disruption or failure if left untreated. Even some local traffic lights and grocery store cash registers could be affected.

The Y2K problem will affect every nation and will serve to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the world we live in. The time constraints, paired with the tremendous financial and personnel resources needed to address the Y2K problem around the world, truly make this a global challenge. Every nation must take the responsibility to ensure that its critical systems are Y2K compliant and that local Governments and private sectors are solving their Y2K problems. We must focus on international cooperation and share information on the status of Y2K readiness in our respective countries.

The United States Government began a coordinated effort to fix its systems in 1995. We appointed a national Y2K coordinator in February of 1998 who is responsible for overseeing the Government's response to the problem. This includes reaching out to local Governments, the private sector and international entities to promote action on the problem and to offer support to Y2K efforts. Virtually every key sector in the United States has mounted aggressive efforts to address the problem, but it is clear that much work remains. We are committed to our national programme as well as to working with other nations as part of the global effort.

The guidelines for addressing the year 2000 problem of computers, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July this year, highlight the seriousness of the problem and provide useful information on problem solutions and contingency planning. The United States endorses these guidelines and calls for their broad dissemination, as requested by the General Assembly.

The United States looks forward to the meeting of Y2K national coordinators convened by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, which will be held here at the United Nations on Friday, 11 December 1998. The meeting will be attended by over 100 national coordinators or their representatives and will focus on information-sharing and international cooperation to solve Y2K problems on the national, regional and international levels. The United States hopes for the broadest participation in this important event.

The Secretary-General's report in document A/53/574, entitled "Steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers" and requested by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, notes that significant efforts have been made within the Secretariat to address the Y2K problem. The report, outlining the status of compliance in various elements of the technological infrastructure, indicates, however, that many areas have yet to be assessed. The report identifies corrective actions which have yet to be taken, raising serious concerns about the ability of the Organization to complete these actions within the necessary time-frame. The United States believes that the United Nations system needs an information management strategy to deal with system-wide problems, of which Y2K is one example.

Our delegation urges Member States to step up national and international activities to reach Y2K compliance and urges the United Nations Secretariat to take all necessary actions to ensure that this Organization can continue to function effectively without interruption to maintain the trust and support of the nations and people of the world.

Mr. Moraga (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The international dimension of the year 2000 computer problem is as complex as its national. That is why the Government of Chile has incorporated this item on the international agenda into its foreign policy.

President Frei has made concrete proposals to the Southern Cone Common Market, the Rio Group, the Ibero-American Summit, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and, at a bilateral level, Argentina. The global interdependence of systems associated with transport services, energy, telecommunications, defence, finance, borders, health and supplies, among others, require resolute and urgent international cooperative action at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

In the global context of the world economy, a country can no longer remain indifferent to events elsewhere in the world. The international challenge represented by the change of millenniums obliges every country to work with others in a responsible, transparent and timely way. This task should not be carried out only with one's geographical neighbours; one's "virtual" neighbours must be taken into account as well.

In order for this joint work to be effective, it is necessary in advance for each country to have adopted the measures necessary to ensuring its own operational continuity and compliance with commitments undertaken as a purchaser and/or strategic provider of goods and services. We understand that bilateral or multilateral cooperation consists of developing joint efforts and activities to ensure the uninterrupted supply and provision of international services related to oil and gas pipelines, electrical networks, satellites, fibre optics, financial operations, border crossings, the operation of ports and airports, and so on.

It is very possible that not all systems will be corrected before the deadline. It is therefore likely that there will be some difficulties after and even before the change of date. Our current work should be aimed at reducing those difficulties to a minimum. We must prioritize our action to ensure the uninterrupted provision to the population of such vital basic services as light, water, gas, telephones and health care. If only one system can be corrected, we feel that the electrical system should be targeted.

Given these circumstances, Ambassador Ahmad Kamal's initiative to convene, on 11 December, a meeting on the year 2000 computer problem is a worthy one. The Government of Chile is committed to supporting that meeting and to promoting action to strengthen the work of the United Nations Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics. This will make it possible to implement the actions that result from agreements that are reached next Friday.

The draft resolution before the Assembly on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers will help to promote the international action made necessary by the advent of the new millennium. The Government of Chile expresses its support for the draft resolution.

Ms. Cardoze (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): In its capacity as this year's Coordinator of the Rio Group, the delegation of Panama is honoured to speak on agenda item 160, "Global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers".

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The member States of the Rio Group wish to express their appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report in document A/53/574, which presents the steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. Likewise, the member States of the Rio Group wish to congratulate the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council for all the efforts to make Member States, in particular the developing countries, aware of the year 2000 computer problem. We wish to highlight the tireless leadership of the Chairman of the Working Group, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, the Permanent Representative of Pakistan, whose dynamism has led to a meeting of national coordinators on the computer millennium problem to be held at United Nations Headquarters on 11 December 1998.

Panama had the honour of presiding over the 88th meeting of the General Assembly on 26 June 1998, when resolution 52/233 was adopted on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers.

The Rio Group wishes to express its full support for the statement made on this item by the delegation of Indonesia on behalf of the countries of the Group of 77 and China.

The Rio Group underscores with appreciation the work accomplished by the Working Group on Informatics, which has emphasized the importance of making Governments aware of the year 2000 problem and of making small companies and local governmental agencies realize the complexity of the subject, as well as the importance of close cooperation between Governments and the private sector, not only at the national level but also at the international level.

For the Rio Group, the guidelines proposed by the Working Group to deal with the year 2000 computer problem are far- reaching and significant because they contain the necessary elements to raise awareness of the year 2000 problem, to assess the problem and possible solutions and to plan for unforeseeable situations.

In conclusion, allow me to point out that the heads of State and Government of the member States of the Rio Group, who met in September 1998 in Panama, emphasized the year 2000 computer problem:

> "The dawn of the third millennium will bring a change in the digits of dates stored in computer systems. This fact could have grave consequences in view of the heavy interdependence of information

systems, not only nationally but worldwide. Accordingly, we support the adoption of measures to prevent and overcome this problem, especially in relation to systems under our own control, thereby creating the conditions to ensure the basic operational capacity of national systems and promoting and supporting relevant actions in the private sector. We will encourage the exchange of know-how and experience to reduce risks and enhance savings in this effort."

The member States of the Rio Group therefore urge the industrialized countries to contribute with technology and means to resolve this problem. The Rio Group supports the draft resolution in document A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

Mr. Suh Dae-won (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is acutely aware of the threat the 2000 date conversion problem of computers poses to a vastly interconnected world. Indeed, our economies, telecommunications and transportation systems are all interlinked, making this issue a global challenge. As the date 31 December 1999 represents an unavoidable deadline, my delegation welcomes the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics of the Economic and Social Council in raising the level of awareness of the "millennium bug".

It is clear that the urgency of this problem and the rapid nearing of the year 2000 require that the international community work in unison and effectively. This effort will demand a great deal of technical expertise and financial resources. Therefore, we encourage our fellow Member States, the public and the private sectors and civil society to work together to tackle this threat. We hope that the United Nations system will be at the forefront in taking the necessary measures so that their computer equipment is year-2000-compliant. We also look to the United Nations to play a leading role in increasing member country awareness and in helping them find ways to solve this issue.

My delegation looks forward to the United Nations conference on the Y2K problem to be held on 11 December, organized by the Working Group on Informatics for national coordinators. This meeting will serve as an important occasion to advance substantive discussions and exchanges on how to coordinate international action to avert this serious problem.

Given the gravity and the urgency of the matter, my delegation strongly supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1 on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers. We believe it is important to act now so that our transition into the next millennium will be a smooth one on all levels. My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Ahmad Kamal for his work and diligence in preparing this draft resolution and for his efforts in bringing this crucial issue to the attention of the international community.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): As a United Nations Member State and an active member of the international information community, the Ukraine is deeply concerned with the approach of the Y2K threat and is undertaking measures to avoid the possible consequences of this extraordinary situation, not only for itself but also for its communications with the rest of the world.

The steps towards resolving the "millennium bug" problem are taken in my country in accordance with the national programme of informatization that has a status of State law and determines the directions, acting forces and stages of development of national information technologies.

At this stage our experts work on the results of examination of computers, software, information systems and networks that are used by Government structures. Priority is given to power energy, including its nuclear sector, and also finances, the social sphere, transportation and communications.

The task of reducing the consequences of Y2K problem in the Ukraine is a very difficult one, although our country has enough highly qualified personnel to resolve the technical aspects of the problem. But the lack of financial resources keeps Ukraine from resolving the approaching computer disaster by the year 2000, which may cause unpredictable consequences. Compared to the Western countries, where the damage from the failure of computers could reach trillions of dollars, the problem here will be on a much different scale. The real danger is that it may affect the Chernobyl and other operating nuclear power stations. Inside every computer chip is a little clock. If the clock stops running, the chip stops running. It is like a little bomb. If the chip happened to be in a nuclear power plant, the worst that could happen, specialists hope, is that a large portion of the territory of Ukraine would be blacked out in the middle of winter, as the reactors and other power stations are temporarily shut down. But then again, anything is possible, as happened one April night in 1986 when one of the Chernobyl reactors failed to stop.

Even if the Chernobyl nuclear power station is shut down, dozens of other nuclear reactors across the territory of the former Soviet Union, which work with 40 per cent of computer systems worldwide, will be affected if they fail to recognize the turn of their internal clocks from the year 1999 to the year 2000. This makes them vulnerable to malfunctions from the "millennium bomb".

That is why Ukraine appreciates very much the efforts of United Nations Member States in combining their potential to resolve the Y2K problem, and why we support draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1. We also acknowledge as very instrumental, and I would say crucial, the role of Ambassador Ahmad Kamal of Pakistan in this process. We hope that the forthcoming meeting of national year 2000 coordinators will draw the attention of the world community and international financial organizations to the acute needs of developing countries and economies in transition in the context of the Y2K threat.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The preparedness of the United Nations system for solving the problem of the year 2000 in computer and other technical systems which are serving the Secretariat of the Organization and Member States is of the utmost importance for the effective functioning of the Organization. We believe that resolution 52/233, adopted at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, has come in a timely manner to focus attention on this problem.

The report prepared by the Secretary-General, document A/53/574, on steps taken within the United Nations system to resolve the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers, gives us a clear picture of the state of affairs in this area. The Information Technology Services Division within the Office of Central Support Services of the Secretariat has already done a great deal of work to adapt the telephone system, local and wide area networks and mainframe systems to the year 2000 problem. It is reported that 5,200 computers at Headquarters have been replaced with state-of-the-art hardware and software, preparing them for the transition to the year 2000. Important work is also being done in the regional economic commissions, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Bank, among others.

However, the report gives only general information on the steps which are under way or are planned with regard to the year 2000. There is virtually no information on the specific technical results or on current and estimated costs of carrying out such measures throughout the United Nations system. In our view, such information would be of great practical significance in order to evaluate the scope and the technical and economic effectiveness of the work under way. Also helpful would be data on the chosen suppliers and providers of computer services for the Secretariat.

Experts in the area of computer technology have evaluated the world costs for eliminating the year 2000 problem at somewhere from $300 to $600 billion. These appraisals are only approximate in nature, but they can give a picture of the complexity, global nature and expense of such a problem. In this connection, it would be very important to have an estimate of the cost within the United Nations itself, since this is directly linked to possible consequences for the United Nations regular budget.

The Russian delegation agrees with the conclusions of the report to the effect that the failure of one of the United Nations computerized systems to achieve year 2000 compliance might have a domino effect and impact the operations of others which have been adapted to the year 2000 problem.

This problem is not limited only to the technical level and computer systems; it is also a problem of coordination and management. In this connection, I would like to emphasize the importance of the activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Information Technology Coordination Committee. We also believe that we should enhance the role of the Economic and Social Council's Open-ended Working Group on Informatics in order to deal with problems that might arise in the future within the United Nations system in the formation of an information society for the twenty-first century. We welcome the initiative of the Group and of Ambassador Kamal personally to hold on 11 December of this year an expanded meeting on the year 2000 problem, with the participation of national coordinators.

In Russia, the problem of the year 2000 has attracted great attention. In May of this year the Government adopted the relevant instructions, and there are to be hearings in the Russian Parliament on this problem. Throughout the country, we have begun an inventory of the computer systems in various spheres of the economy in the context of the year 2000 problem.

Currently we have established a plan for steps which will define the stages and time-frame for the establishment of an infrastructure for solving this problem. This includes preparing for the implementation of an independent certification which would define the year 2000 compliance of information systems in Russia.

Given the scope and overlapping nature of the year 2000 computer problem, which affects the interests of every Member State, the Russian delegation is counting on the further enhancement of cooperation and mutual assistance, including through the United Nations, in solving this truly global task. In this connection, the Russian delegation supports draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1, submitted by Pakistan, on the global implications of the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.43/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/86).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 160?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/707)

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/708)

(c) Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/709)

(d) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/710)

(e) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/711)

(f) International Civil Service Commission

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/712)

The Acting President: I first invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (a) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions", document A/53/707.

The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 12 of its report that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Ms. Nazareth A. Incera, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, Mr. Rajat Saha, Mr. Nicholas A. Thorne, Mr. Fumiaki Toya and Mr. Gian Luigi Valenza.

May I take it that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We come now to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (b) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions", document A/53/708.

In paragraph 6 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Pieter Johannes Bierma, Mr. Paul Ekorong A Ndong, Mr. Neil Hewitt Francis and Mr. Henry Hanson-Hall.

In paragraph 7 of the same report, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office as indicated: Mr. Sergio Chaparro Ruiz (Chile) from 1 January 1999 to 31 December 2000; Mr. Bernardo Greiver (Uruguay) from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2001; and Mr. Eduardo Iglesias (Argentina) from 1 January to 31 December 1999 and from 1 January to 31 December 2001.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint the persons recommended?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (c) of agenda item 17, entitled "Appointment of a member of the Board of Auditors", document A/53/709.

In paragraph 5 of that report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the Chairman of the Commission of Audit of the Philippines as a member of the Board of Auditors for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 July 1999.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to appoint this person?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I now invite members to turn their attention to the report of the Fifth Committee on sub-item (d) of agenda item 17, entitled "Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee", document A/53/710.

The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of the following persons as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Yves Oltramare, Mr. Emmanuel Noi Omaboe and Mr. Jürgen Reimnitz.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We next come to the report of the Fifth Committee dealing with the appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal under sub-item (e) of agenda item 17, document A/53/711.

In paragraph 6 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Kevin Haugh and Ms. Deborah Taylor Ashford.

May I consider that the Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We now turn to the report of the Fifth Committee concerning the International Civil Service Commission under sub-item (f) of agenda item 17, document A/53/712.

In paragraph 7 of the report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999: Mr. Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor, Ms. Turkia Daddah, Mr. Wolfgang Stöckl, Mr. Carlos S. Vegega and Mr. Eugeniusz Wyzner.

In the same paragraph, the Fifth Committee also recommends that the Assembly designate Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor as Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999.

In the same paragraph, the Fifth Committee further recommends that the Assembly designate Carlos S. Vegega as Vice-Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 1999.

May I take it that the General Assembly appoints these persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 17.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Draft resolution A/53/L.62

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Draft resolution A/53/L.59

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Draft resolutions A/53/L.31, A/53/L.33/Rev.2, A/53/L.44, A/53/L.63

(d) Assistance to the Palestinian people:
(i) draft resolutions A/53/54/Rev.1, A/53/L.56
(ii) draft decision A/53/L.65

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its debate on agenda item 20 and sub-items (a), (b) and (d) at the 59th plenary meeting, on 16 November 1998.

I call on the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.62.

Mr. Manz (Austria): It is my honour to introduce, on behalf of the European Union and numerous sponsors, the draft resolution on "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel", contained in document A/53/L.62. It is my understanding that Guatemala, Niger and Panama wish to join the list of sponsors.

The European Union shares the Secretary-General's concern regarding the continuous erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, in particular the Geneva Conventions and the principles set out in resolution 46/182. We condemn deliberate attacks on civilian populations and the denial of the basic right to receive humanitarian assistance, and we reiterate that humanitarian assistance has to be granted safe, unhindered and non-discriminatory access and that the civilian population, as well as humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel, have to be adequately protected.

United Nations humanitarian agencies report that more and more of their staff are working in areas designated insecure. The number of people in need who may have died because it was impossible to provide aid on account of the security situation is inestimable. We strongly condemn any act or failure to act that obstructs or prevents humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel from discharging their functions or entail their being subject to threats, the use of force and even injury and death.

The report of the Secretary-General has once again drawn attention to the safety and security risks faced by humanitarian personnel and United Nations personnel. The situation on the ground has not improved over the last year, and therefore the European Union is again taking the initiative to submit a draft resolution that condemns attacks against humanitarian personnel or United Nations personnel and, *inter alia*, urges all States to take the necessary measures to ensure the full and effective implementation of the relevant principles and rules of international humanitarian law. The European Union wants to stress in this context that the list of war crimes contained in the Statute of the International Criminal Court also includes attacks intentionally directed against humanitarian or peacekeeping personnel.

The draft resolution before us requests the Secretary-General to present a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the safety and security situation of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel and measures to be taken to improve it. We are looking forward to a report which discusses the roots of humanitarian insecurity and provides a review of existing security arrangements, including the needs of non-governmental organizations. We encourage the Secretary-General to go further in addressing these issues, and we assure him once again of our full support in that effort.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.59.

Mr. Norström (Sweden): I have the honour to introduce on behalf of the sponsors the draft resolution on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations contained in document A/53/L.59.

The first draft was discussed in informal consultations on 24 November. In those consultations

other delegations and for the good spirit of cooperation and partnership in the consultations.

In the draft resolution, the General Assembly recalls its previous resolutions on the topic, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General and welcomes the progress made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in strengthening the coordination. The Assembly welcomes the first humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council held this summer and the agreed conclusions from that session and then calls upon relevant actors to cooperate to ensure the implementation and follow-up to the agreed conclusions.

Finally, the General Assembly requests the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the 1999 session of the Economic and Social Council, on the strengthening of the coordination, including the implementation of and follow-up to the agreed conclusions and invites the Economic and Social Council to consider ways to further enhance the humanitarian segment of its future sessions, as outlined in the agreed conclusions.

My delegation and the sponsors trust that the draft resolution can be adopted by consensus. May I add that the following delegations wish to join in sponsoring the draft resolution: Bangladesh, Greece and Guatemala.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Senegal, on behalf of the African States, to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.63.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Group of African States, I should like to submit for consideration by the General Assembly, under sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, draft resolution A/53/L.63, on special assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The draft resolution, procedural in nature, was negotiated with representatives of donor countries and other interested parties with the support of the African Group. It is a follow-up to resolution 52/169 A, with the same title, adopted last year. It also takes into account current developments and the consequences of the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While the report of the Secretary-General emphasizes the financial and material assistance provided by the United Nations in 1997, we should also acknowledge that since the meeting in December 1997 of the group of "Friends of the Congo", the situation in the country has developed considerably — a new situation that has had negative repercussions on the country's social and economic conditions.

In spite of the establishment of a trust fund to support economic recovery programmes for the Congo in the context of its three-year plan, the commitments made by development partners have not yet fully met the expectations of the Congo authorities. A new meeting of the "Friends of the Congo" will certainly be necessary. The armed conflict now sundering the Democratic Republic of the Congo has further exacerbated that country's economic problems — and for a long time to come.

The draft resolution before the Assembly calls for a lasting solution to the conflict, so that, in a calm and peaceful climate, the people of the Congo can resume the process of rebuilding and returning to the normalcy they crave, both in terms of the economy and in terms of democracy.

The draft resolution acknowledges the value of the coordination of humanitarian assistance that continues to be provided to those affected by the armed conflict, and urges friendly countries and non-governmental organizations to increase their assistance with a view to achieving the rapid recovery of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This draft resolution was the result of negotiations and a consensus with donor countries, and I urge the Assembly to adopt it by consensus. The following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.63: China, the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros, Djibouti and India.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2.

Mr. Benhima (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti", under agenda item 20 (b), "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions". I wish to announce that Bangladesh and Greece have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

This draft resolution, sponsored by more than 20 countries from many continents, recalls the difficult natural conditions from which Djibouti suffers, which have a considerable impact on its development. These include droughts and torrential rains and floods such as those that ravaged the country's infrastructure in 1989 and 1994 and more recently in October and November 1997. Let us recall that this small country is faithful to a long tradition of generosity and hospitality, and the draft resolution notes that it is host to tens of thousands of refugees and persons displaced from their countries, the large majority of them from Somalia. The burden of these refugees puts a particular strain on Djibouti's already precarious social infrastructure.

In the face of a subregional environment that is most unfavourable, especially because of its instability, Djibouti has courageously and unswervingly embarked upon the path of political reform and has undertaken a major effort at economic recovery by signing agreements with international financial institutions. But these efforts cannot succeed without massive and generous support from the international community. It is in that spirit that the draft resolution appeals to the international community to support these efforts by contributing to the process of demobilization and the reintegration of demobilized soldiers, and to the rebuilding of social infrastructure.

Finally, the draft resolution — which it is my hope will be adopted by consensus, like similar texts in previous years — expresses gratitude to the countries and intergovernmental organizations that have demonstrated their solidarity in a concrete way, through their contributions, to the Government and the people of Djibouti. It also expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his continued efforts to make the international community aware of the difficulties faced by that fraternal country.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Tajikistan to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.44.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of Tajikistan has the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.44, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan". For the third time, the General Assembly will be adopting a text of this kind, which reflects the international community's support for the peace process and for the normalization of the situation in the Republic of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is going through a difficult stage in its post-conflict development. Humanitarian efforts are needed to supplement the activities of the Government in rebuilding the country's economic life. As the Secretary-General has said, the continuation of humanitarian programmes is an investment in the cause of peace and a way of ensuring that the situation in Tajikistan does not become a chronic emergency.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his intention to issue a consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for 1999.

Specifically, the draft resolution before the Assembly welcomes the efforts aimed at achieving peace and national reconciliation in Tajikistan. It welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General in drawing the attention of the international community to the acute humanitarian problems of Tajikistan, and expresses its appreciation to all States and organizations that have responded positively to the humanitarian needs of Tajikistan. The text recognizes that comprehensive international support remains essential for the intensification of the peace process in Tajikistan and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the progress made in the implementation of the present draft resolution.

We express our deep gratitude to all countries that have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution and to all delegations that helped to reach agreement on it. We are grateful especially for the coordinating role played by the representative of Denmark, Ambassador Jørgen Bøjer.

I wish to announce that Bangladesh, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Moldova and Pakistan have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.44.

It is my hope that the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft decision A/53/L.65.

Mr. Zaki (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation asked for the floor on behalf of the States sponsors of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.56. After numerous consultations and contacts during the last two weeks, it was possible to reach a formula that enjoyed the approval of the parties that participated in those consultations. I therefore request that draft resolution A/53/L.56 not be put to the vote.

I would like to introduce the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65 on behalf of the following States: Jordan, Tunisia, Oman, Kuwait, Mauritania, Yemen, Djibouti and Palestine. The draft decision was agreed after a series of long negotiations that produced the text contained in the document.

In this respect, I wish to thank the delegations of member States of the European Union for co-sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.54 and for their constructive participation in the negotiations on the draft decision. I appeal to all delegations present to vote in favour of the draft resolution and the draft decision.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Austria to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", as contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev.1.

The sponsors of this draft resolution continue to attach particular importance to assistance to the Palestinian people. By the terms of this draft resolution, the General Assembly expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General, the Member States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for their efforts and continuous assistance to the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, the General Assembly calls upon relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system to intensify their assistance in order to meet the urgent needs of the Palestinian people in accordance with the priorities set forth by the Palestinian Authority, with emphasis on institutional capacity-building. It also calls upon the international donor community to expedite delivery of pledged assistance to the Palestinian people to meet their urgent needs.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution welcomes the results of the Ministerial Conference to Support Middle East Peace and Development which took place in Washington, D.C., on 30 November 1998. On the occasion of that Conference, the European Union underlined its continued commitment to the peace process through a renewal of its financial assistance to the Palestinian people. The European Union will also play a central role in the technical follow-up to the Conference.

As the major donor of assistance to the Palestinian people, the European Union is pleased to again initiate this draft resolution. We hope that the General Assembly will be able to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1 without a vote, as it has done in previous years.

The Acting President: I should now like to consult the Assembly with a view to considering draft resolution A/53/L.63 and draft decision A/53/L.65, as requested by its sponsors. In this connection, since these documents have only been circulated this morning, it would be necessary to waive the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which reads as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft resolution A/53/L.63.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to consider draft decision A/53/L.65.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/53/L.33/Rev.2, L.44, L.54/Rev.1, L.59, L.62 and L.63 and draft decision A/53/L.65.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Jacob (Israel): This year, as in years past, Israel will join the consensus on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", and I would like to explain our position in this regard.

For many years, Israel has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as with other international organizations, in implementing programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In this respect, Israel believes that the United Nations Special

Coordinator in these areas can play a significant role in promoting the social and economic goals set out by those organizations.

We also welcome the concerted efforts of Member States, international financial institutions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to aid in the development efforts. Israel believes that the promotion of the economic well-being of the Palestinians is an essential element in the promotion of peace and stability, and that this effort can be advanced only through cooperation.

In this regard, we feel that it is necessary to mention that, in our opinion, assistance to the Palestinians should be as tangible as possible, and on the ground. The holding of conferences and seminars cannot and should not replace direct economic and development assistance. If the economic situation is as serious as the draft resolution asserts, then surely the funds available should be applied towards directly alleviating that situation, and not for the purpose of holding yet another seminar.

Israel's participation in the consensus on the draft resolution should not be construed as implying any position regarding the present status of the areas referred to as "occupied territory".

Additionally, our support does not carry any implication regarding Israel's position on the permanent status of those territories, which, in accordance with the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 and the implementation agreements achieved in its wake, is a matter to be negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians in the framework of the permanent status negotiations, which have just recently reconvened.

As far as the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65, Israel will vote against it, for the following reasons.

First of all, this draft decision is yet another attempt to intervene in the bilateral negotiations between the parties through a decision of the General Assembly. We would like to reiterate the position of Israel that, as stipulated in the terms of reference of the peace process and the agreements achieved to date, all outstanding issues are to be resolved through direct negotiations between the parties themselves. In his letter dated 9 September 1993, addressed to Prime Minister Rabin, Chairman Arafat committed himself to abide by this principle.

Secondly, Israel regrets that contentious political elements have been introduced into the issue of assistance to the Palestinian people. Of all parties, the Palestinians themselves should be most sensitive to the value of maintaining broad support for this issue. That broad support was most recently manifested at last week's conference of donor parties, held in Washington, D.C., in which Israel willingly participated. As detailed in our statement to the General Assembly during the 16 November debate on this issue, Israel is greatly interested in promoting the economic well-being of the Palestinians in the territories. Therefore, it is regrettable that the Palestinian observer delegation found it fit to introduce extraneous and controversial political terminology into this subject.

Thirdly, the draft decision has been presented despite, and indeed because of, the legal opinion of the Secretariat, which objected to the application of the terminology as demanded by the Palestinian observer delegation. It should be recognized by the Assembly that this draft decision represents an attempt to overpower the legal position of the Secretariat itself. This is yet another example of the abuse of the United Nations system in the service of a narrow political cause.

Finally, the language of the draft decision is riddled with contradictions. Just one example is the term "occupied". The head of the Palestinian Observer delegation stated here on 30 November that only a few thousand Palestinians live under occupation in the city of Hebron, in the area of the city defined in the accords as H2. Therefore, the rest of Hebron, and all the other areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, which cover about 98 per cent of the Palestinian population in the territories, are, according to this view, no longer to be considered "occupied", and consequently do not fall under this draft decision's definition. It would not therefore be "appropriate" — as the draft decision stipulates — that reports relating to these areas use the suggested terminology. We have more comments regarding this draft, and we reserve our right to submit them in due course.

For all these reasons, Israel will vote against the draft decision contained in document A/53/L.65.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the six draft resolutions and one draft decision submitted under agenda item 20 and its sub-items (a), (b) and (d).

The Assembly, under agenda item 20, will first take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.62, entitled "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.62?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/87).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 20, take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.59, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.59?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/88).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2, entitled "Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.33/Rev.2?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 J).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.44, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation in Tajikistan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.44?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 K).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.63, entitled "Special assistance for the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.63?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/1 L).

The Acting President: Next, under sub-item (d) of agenda item 20, the General Assembly will take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.54/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/89).

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now, under sub-item (d) of item 20, take a decision on draft decision A/53/L.65, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), United States of America

Draft decision A/53/L.65 was adopted by 131 votes to 4.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Jordan and the United Arab Emirates informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Before calling the first speaker in explanation of vote after the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation would like to explain its vote on draft resolution A/53/L.62, "Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel".

The Russian delegation supports the humanitarian thrust of this resolution, which is a logical continuation of efforts to protect the lives, honour and dignity of the people who are implementing the principles and will of the United Nations in various regions of the globe. Russia took an active part in the adoption in 1994 of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and reaffirms its readiness to continue working to ensure the safety of those individuals not yet protected by international law. Therefore, the Russian delegation supported the adoption of this resolution. However, we could not co-sponsor it, since the work on the draft did not take into consideration a number of the concerns expressed by our delegation.

In our view, unifying within the framework of a single draft resolution various categories of humanitarian personnel, United Nations personnel and associated personnel requires drawing a clear distinction based on the already existing legal regimes for protecting these people. In particular, we need to distinguish between those who are participating as combatants in United Nations operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter — personnel whose protection is regulated by laws relating to international armed conflicts — and staff who are not taking a direct part in hostilities and who enjoy relevant immunities and privileges, as well as other personnel who are taking part in humanitarian activities to whom such protection does not extend.

While supporting the general thrust towards a framework that unifies the various aspects of this topic, we hope that the concerns expressed by the Russian delegation will be taken into account by the sponsors in further work.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus concerning the draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, contained in document A/53/L.54/Rev. 1, which has just been adopted. We did this on the basis of our ongoing support for the efforts to help the Palestinian people deal with the repressive Israeli policies.

My delegation supports the operative paragraphs aimed at providing assistance to the Palestinian people in order to overcome the great challenges they face, support them in meeting their needs and enhance their social and economic development. However, we have reservations concerning some of the preambular paragraphs of the resolution because they do not reflect how the crisis faced by the Middle East peace process has developed, or the situation in general.

The Syrian Arab Republic believes that travelling the true path towards achieving the social and economic development of the Palestinian people and alleviating their suffering requires eliminating the real causes of this suffering, which lie in the Israeli occupation. Travelling the correct path requires implementing the United Nations resolutions aimed at putting an end to the occupation of the Arab territories that Israel has occupied since 1967 and not allowing Israel to continue its policies of enclosure and seizure. Seizure of Palestinian lands, exploitation of the natural resources of the occupied Arab territories, expansion of settlement activities, the policies of putting obstacles in front of the Middle East peace process — all these are at the heart of the problem confronting the peace process at the present time. And they are all relevant to real development in the Palestinian occupied territory.

As for the allegations that we heard just now from the Israeli delegate — that Israel supports international efforts to help the Palestinian people, though it does not recognize that the lands mentioned in the draft resolution are occupied territory — this is highly ironic and shows no respect for the will of the international community, which has been expressed in many relevant United Nations resolutions, particularly those of the Security Council. The Israeli statement also aims at evading the implementation of the United Nations resolutions and the

solution to this problem first outlined in Madrid in 1991. For Israel to allege that it is possible to achieve peace and development under conditions of siege, occupation and collective punishment is just a futile attempt to justify occupation and oppression in the Palestinian territory.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-items (a) and (d) of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Tomorrow morning, Tuesday, 8 December 1998, the General Assembly, as its first item, will continue consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 20, "Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions", and will take action on draft resolutions A/53/L.31 and A/53/L.64.

Agenda item 24 (*continued*)

Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review

Draft resolution (A/53/L.39/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its debate on agenda item 24 at its 47th plenary meeting, on 28 October 1998. In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/53/L.39/Rev.1.

I now give the floor to the representative of Senegal to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The adoption by the General Assembly on 18 December 1991 of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) represented, for our continent and for the entire international community, a new hope for the African peoples.

In 1996 the Assembly conducted a mid-term review of UN-NADAF. That same year the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was launched, in a context characterized by the globalization of issues and the emergence of new challenges resulting from that globalization. This means that African issues have continued to occupy an important place in our Organization's deliberations. It should be noted that Africa has achieved appreciable economic performance in spite of constraints of all types, which it continues to face.

In draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, submitted for the Assembly's consideration and which it is my privilege to introduce in my capacity as Chairman of the African Group, the Assembly takes note with appreciation of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, as well as the Tokyo Agenda for Action adopted by the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) in October 1998.

The draft resolution emphasizes the need to focus attention on the priority areas identified by African countries themselves in the Cairo Agenda for Action. It reiterates the importance of evaluating the follow-up machinery for the implementation of UN-NADAF at the national, subregional, regional and global levels. It requests the Secretary-General to propose a set of performance indicators, *inter alia*, with a view to assessing and measuring the progress made in this framework.

Draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1 notes the urgent need for all States, international and multilateral organizations, financial institutions and development funds and programmes of the United Nations system to take concrete measures to ensure full and coordinated implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly for the Mid-term Review of the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

Lastly, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of UN-NADAF through the coordination of initiatives for Africa and to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session a report on the follow-up to resolution 51/32 of 6 December 1996 on the mid-term review of UN-NADAF, pending its final review and appraisal, which is scheduled for the year 2002.

Japan and the Group of 77 and China have become sponsors of this draft resolution, and we wish to thank the Group of 77 and China, which was involved in the

negotiations of this draft resolution from the very beginning.

If you will allow me, Sir, I will now make certain corrections to the text in English, because we worked on the basis of the English version.

In the first line of the fifth preambular paragraph, after "Noting with concern that", read "while" instead of "despite"; delete "the" before "challenges" and "opportunities"; and insert "are" between the words "opportunities" and "created". Thus, the corrected version should read:

(*spoke in English*)

"Noting with concern that, while both challenges and opportunities are created ...."

(*spoke in French*)

In the last line of the seventh preambular paragraph, after the words "as well as", change "highlights" to "highlighting". Therefore, the corrected last line of the seventh preambular paragraph should read:

(*spoke in English*)

"as well as highlighting the concepts of ownership and global partnership,".

(*spoke in French*)

Those errors were made by the Secretariat.

The next change is in operative paragraph 2, where "which, among other things, has impeded" is replaced by "which has been an impediment, among other things, to the". Thus the corrected version should read as follows:

(*spoke in English*)

"Expresses concern at the overall declining trend of resource flows to Africa, in particular in the level of official development assistance, which has been an impediment, among other things, to the timely implementation of the New Agenda";

(*spoke in French*)

There is also a correction in the second line of operative paragraph 5. Replace the third "and" with ",as well as". The corrected version should read:

(*spoke in English*)

"... and development funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations ...".

(*spoke in French*)

In the fourth line of operative paragraph 6, replace the words "to ascertain whether" with "to ensure that". Therefore, the corrected version should read:

(*spoke in English*)

"... and, in this context, to ensure that the United Nations and its funds and programmes ...."

Finally, in the last line of the last operative paragraph — paragraph 7 — replace the word "Assembly" with the word "its". That line should now read:

"a progress report on the implementation of its resolution 51/32".

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 24, "Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, including measures and recommendations agreed upon at its mid-term review".

In this context, while the draft resolution before the Assembly in document A/53/L.39/Rev.1 was negotiated by the African Group, the text should be viewed as a commonly agreed position of the Group of 77 and China and as a Group of 77 initiative from its start. I should like to underline in this connection the important need for the implementation of initiatives for development to be country-driven. Therefore, priority focus should be given to those areas determined by the host countries. It is well known that the Group of 77 and China have consistently maintained this position.

Before concluding my brief remarks, I should like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Group to our African colleagues, who have been instrumental in bringing this draft before the Assembly and also to the other Groups and countries that have joined in sponsoring this draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, as orally corrected, was adopted (resolution 53/90).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

May I remind her that explanations of vote or position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): While we support many of the measures underlined in this resolution, we would have preferred more balance in the resolution on implementing the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF).

The United States believes that assistance from the international community, through bilateral and multilateral initiatives alike, will play a significant role in bettering the lives of Africans throughout the continent. We strongly believe, however, that Africans themselves will be required to take the lead if the initiative is to achieve tangible results. Our response, both in our own bilateral and in multilateral development efforts, is to work more often with the stakeholders and increase African ownership of the development process.

The Secretary-General's progress report highlighted the fact that more needs to be accomplished on the promotion of private sector and foreign direct investment, the democratization and strengthening of civil society, and debt relief. This can be accomplished only through national ownership and global partnership, which have been emphasized by the Secretary-General and which we believe are the keys to UN-NADAF.

International support for capacity-building is a component which the United Nations can provide. Accordingly, we will continue to encourage increased coordination among national officials, Africa's own development experts, specialists in the development community and the United Nations at the field level in order to develop pragmatic, reality-based initiatives.

This coordination must take place, however, in tandem with resolve on the part of African leaders to take necessary measures to promote such elements of a successful strategy as good governance, accountability, transparency, restraint, the rule of law and an active civil society.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 24?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 35 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity

Draft resolution (A/53/L.21/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on this item at its 49th plenary meeting on 29 October 1998.

I now give the floor to the representative of Burkina Faso to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the States members of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity", under agenda item 35. For reasons beyond our control, the draft resolution was not available when the item was under consideration on 29 October.

In its preambular part, the draft resolution, *inter alia*, recalls the Secretary-General's report, in document A/53/419, on cooperation between the United Nations and the OAU, as well as the agreement of 15 November 1965 as updated and signed on 9 October 1990 by the Secretaries-General of the two organizations. These two documents define the modalities for cooperation between the two organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Still in the preambular part, the draft resolution stresses the importance of three significant events that took place this year and that will further strengthen this cooperation: the thirty-fourth summit of the OAU, the ministerial meeting of the Security Council on the

situation in Africa and, of course, the issuance of the important report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa.

With respect to current events, the draft resolution expresses deep concern that, despite policies of reform and the efforts of African leaders to promote economic integration, the economic situation of African countries remains critical. It calls the international community's attention to the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa.

The draft resolution also recognizes the importance of developing and maintaining a culture of peace and tolerance in international relations, given that the ideals of the United Nations and the OAU are founded on peace and hence on the prevention of conflicts and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

In the operative part, draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1 notes with satisfaction the status of cooperation between the two organizations, in particular, the Secretary-General's decision to establish a liaison office with the OAU in Addis Ababa. An appeal is made to United Nations organs, and more specifically the Security Council, to continue to involve the OAU closely in their activities, especially those pertaining to Africa.

In the area of international security, the draft resolution invites the United Nations, on one hand, to continue to help the OAU to strengthen the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and, on the other hand, to encourage donor countries to enhance African peacekeeping capabilities.

As regards economic matters, the draft resolution before the Assembly calls for support of the functioning and the activities of the African Economic Community and invites United Nations agencies to intensify the coordination of their activities as well as their harmonization with programmes of subregional and regional organizations.

Finally, an appeal is made for better African representation within the United Nations system, more specifically at high-level decision-making posts.

The draft resolution, on which the General Assembly will soon take a decision, is the outcome of negotiations and joint efforts with other countries and groups of countries. It is in keeping with those resolutions we have always adopted on this agenda item, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus once again.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/53/L.21/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 53/91).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 35?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 164 (*continued*)

Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Draft resolution (A/53/L.40/Rev.1)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly concluded its debate on this item at its 36th plenary meeting on 12 October 1998.

In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/53/L.40/Rev.1. I now call on the representative of Senegal to introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. Ka (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): First I wish to emphasize the special importance the African Group attaches to the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. For that reason, our Group has taken the initiative of submitting draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1 for approval by the General Assembly.

The initial draft resolution was the subject of serious and fruitful negotiations with our development partners. Therefore, I would like to thank them all and express, on behalf of the African Group as a whole, our deepest gratitude for the positive amendments they proposed to us. I would especially like to thank Canada, the United States of America, Japan and the European Union for their contribution to improving the draft resolution.

In the preambular part, this draft resolution recognizes the significant progress made by the African countries in creating an environment favourable to growth and sustainable development. The preambular part emphasizes the dialectics of peace, security and sustainable development and notes the negative affects of conflicts on civilian populations, especially women and children. It also expresses the grave concern of the United Nations regarding the use of children in armed conflicts and recognizes the need for all parties to adhere to principles of international humanitarian law and relevant human rights instruments. By this draft resolution, the General Assembly also expresses its concern at the negative impact of AIDS, poverty and all forms of discrimination against women and young girls on African development.

In its operative part, the draft resolution welcomes the Secretary-General's report for the holistic and global approach to African problems and for the concrete recommendations he has made as well as his vigorous plea made for Africa. In noting the need for the strong political will of the African States and the international community as a whole with a view to implementing those recommendations, the draft resolution invites the international community to provide Africa with the necessary concessional resources in order to strengthen African capacity and for economic growth and development.

Within that context, the draft resolution strongly underlines the importance of creating an environment favourable to foreign direct investment, especially access of African products to world markets, to good governance, to increase in the volume and effectiveness of official development assistance, to settlement of the unsustainable debt burden, including debt conversion measures and through flexible initiatives regarding the situation of poor, heavily indebted countries. The draft resolution encourages and supports regional cooperation and integration and welcomes the entry into force in May 1994 of the Abuja Treaty, which established the African Economic Community.

Emphasis has also been placed on the need to improve the coordination of organs and institutions of the United Nations system in post-conflict peace-building, as well as on the importance of paying special attention to the specific needs of protecting refugees and displaced persons, especially the most vulnerable, in particular children and women.

Last but not least, the question of follow-up to the implementation of this resolution, as well as to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, has been dealt with. Thus, in addition to the initiatives taken or envisaged by the Economic and Social Council and other bodies and institutions of the United Nations system, we have proposed the establishment, by the President of the General Assembly, of an ad hoc open-ended working group. This working group would be instructed to implement the present draft resolution and, in particular, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report which fall within the purview of the General Assembly. It would determine its mandate, as well as its working methods, taking into account the outcome of the coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council planned for July 1999.

In conclusion, I would like again to express our sincere gratitude to Canada, the European Union, India, Japan and the United States, and to thank, on behalf of the African Group, all those who have improved upon the initial draft with their positive contributions. We would like especially to mention the efforts and support given by the Group of 77 and China in the negotiations on both draft resolution A/53/L.40 and on the draft resolution just adopted, A/53/L.39.

The sponsors of A/53/L.40 are the Group of 77 and China, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States. I would like to thank them all, on behalf of the African Group, for their support for this draft resolution.

If I may, I would like, as I did a few minutes ago with A/53/L.39, to make a few changes to the text of A/53/L.40/Rev.1 because of some typographical errors which have crept in to the English version. Since we worked on the basis of English, I shall make these changes in English.

(*spoke in English*)

At the end of the eighth preambular paragraph, after "relief workers", add "and the use of children as combatants".

In the tenth preambular paragraph, add "problems and", to read "socio-economic problems and challenge".

In operative paragraph 2, with reference to the Secretary-General, insert the word "further", to read "his efforts to further mobilize", rather than simply "his efforts to mobilize".

In operative paragraph 8 we change "rather than" to "instead of", to read "rely upon peaceful means instead of military solutions".

In operative paragraph 9 the word "concessional" is inserted before "resources", to read "providing African countries with sufficient concessional resources".

And finally, in the fourth line of operative paragraph 10, replace "by means of" with "through". The phrase thus reads "including through debt conversion measures".

(*spoke in French*)

These are the changes which have been made to the draft resolution. Once again, I would like to thank the Assembly for its support for this resolution.

Mr. Donokusumo (Indonesia): Once again I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 164, "Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa".

Allow me, first, to thank Member States for their valuable support in adopting draft resolution A/53/L.39/Rev.1, which will contribute to the development of Africa and the achievement of sustainable development on that continent.

The draft resolution now before the Assembly, draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, is of equal importance to the Group of 77 and China. It should be considered as representing the Group's position on this issue, and as a resolution of the Group of 77 and China. I would note that this important draft resolution has been negotiated by the African Group as an important step in achieving peace and development which are among the core issues of concern to the Group.

To conclude, I should like to take this opportunity to express the Group's appreciation to our African colleagues, who have been instrumental in bringing this draft resolution before us, and also to the other groups and countries who have joined us in sponsoring it.

Ms. Montoya (United States of America): When President Clinton travelled to six African nations this past April, he heard at first hand about the efforts and accomplishments of the African people in writing a new chapter in the history of their continent. He met with economic leaders and business people who made clear in no uncertain terms that Africa is open for business. He saw the natural and physical wonders of Africa and heard at first hand how these essential resources are being preserved for future generations. He met with survivors of Rwanda's genocide as they undertook the tasks of rebuilding and reconciliation, and he talked directly with African people as they shared their dreams and aspirations for the future and for the future of their children.

Our delegation believes that the resolution on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa will provide a step forward in assisting Africans in realizing their dreams and aspirations for their future. That is why our delegation is pleased to be a sponsor of this resolution. We believe it correctly identifies actions to be taken at national, subregional, regional and international levels to move towards the goals of creating a new and lasting partnership between Africa and the international community. This partnership has as its goal resolving conflict, promoting democracy and respect for human rights, accelerating the building of political stability and integrating the African continent into the global economy.

The resolution makes clear that building a durable peace and promoting sustainable development in Africa will require increased and sustained political will by African States and the international community. The resolution also expresses support for the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, which we believe identifies key areas where more work is required. We note that the resolution correctly identifies a close linkage among sustainable development, peace and security.

Our delegation believes that one of the most important factors which will allow for sustainable development in all African countries and the participation of all African countries in the global economy is an enabling environment for investment. This environment can be created only through good governance, the establishment of the rule of law and the promotion of transparency and accountability in public administration, respect for human rights and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Only as an adjunct to the efforts of African nations themselves can international technical and financial assistance be used effectively to implement the Secretary-General's recommendations.

As economic opportunity spreads, so too will the prospects for a sustained and lasting peace. In order to promote durable peace, the draft resolution rightly points out that preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures need to be undertaken.

The United States firmly supports strengthening Africa's capacity to participate in all aspects of peacekeeping operations, in particular through increased cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity and also between the United Nations and subregional organizations. These organizations have a critical role to play in resolving and preserving stability in Africa. Accordingly, we have made financial contributions to these organs and have created the African crisis response initiative to assist African soldiers in enhancing the continent's peacekeeping capability.

President Clinton remains committed to working with Congress to restore United States assistance to Africa to historical levels, and we remain hopeful that the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) will help us meet the goal of ensuring that at least 50 per cent of our assistance is spent in Africa.

We reiterate our call for creditors to follow the example of the World Bank and the Paris Club in providing interim debt relief to support reforms to date. Our delegation looks forward to working with our African partners and the international community through the integrated efforts of the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa, as well as the outcome of the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development, with the overall aim of reducing poverty and its associated problems and restoring a sense of hope for future generations.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian delegation attaches great importance to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as to the adoption of the draft resolution that is before the General Assembly. We have noted the substantive and comprehensive nature of this draft, which we will, of course, support.

The Russian delegation took an active part in the work of the Security Council working group, which fine-tuned the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General. In this connection, we have consistently held that the Security Council working group should not get involved in discussing the recommendations of the Secretary-General pertaining to the competence of the General Assembly.

Pursuant to operative paragraph 15 of the draft resolution, the Working Group of the General Assembly that is to be created on the basis of the draft resolution before us will determine its mandate, taking into account the outcome of the deliberations of the Economic and Social Council on this matter. The Working Group will also define the specific approach it will take to its work on the relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. Of course, this work should be carried out bearing in mind the fact that the Security Council is actively considering the recommendations of the report that fall within its purview and has already taken a series of concrete decisions in that respect.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected. May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1, as orally corrected?

Draft resolution A/53/L.40/Rev.1 as orally corrected was adopted (resolution 53/92).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 164?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.20, A/53/L.22/Rev.2)

Reports of the Fifth Committee (A/53/698, A/53/699)

The Acting President: Members will recall that at its 62nd plenary meeting, on 19 November 1998, the General Assembly concluded the debate on this item. I should now like to draw the Assembly's attention to the report of the Fifth Committee contained in document A/53/699 on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.20, and the report of the Fifth Committee contained in document A/53/698 on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/53/L.20 and A/53/L.22/Rev.2.

The General Assembly will first take up draft resolution A/53/L.20, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala". I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.20: Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Nigeria.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.20?

Draft resolution A/53/L.20 was adopted (resolution 53/93).

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take up draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2: Belgium, Brazil, Nigeria, Paraguay, Pèru and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2?

Draft resolution A/53/L.22/Rev.2 was adopted (resolution 53/94).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44.

Agenda item 57, "Question of the Comorian island of Mayotte", originally scheduled for tomorrow morning, will be taken up at a later date to be announced. Sub-item (g) of agenda item 17, "Appointment of members of the Committee on Conferences", will also be taken up at a later date to be announced.

The meeting rose at 6.40 p.m.